

CALL TO ACTION IN THE NEAR EAST

AN ESSAY BY

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The following is an essay written by Dr. Charles Malik that was published in the *Council on Foreign Relations* in July 1956.

The situation in the Near East is once again fluid, awaiting creative decision. This statement is likely to be repeated again and again in the future; but the present situation certainly exemplifies it. The basic elements are all clear. With the relative easing of tensions in the Far East and elsewhere in the world, and with the relative heightening of tension in the Near East, the attention of the Western world, and especially of the United States, has lately focused on conditions in our area. American public and private opinion has had our situation actively before it for months. There seems to be an even greater desire to do something about it than there was in 1947 and 1948. The feeling is that things cannot be allowed to drift much longer. The stakes are too high for statesmen to resort only to fumbling and muddling. Nor is it fated that one must be helpless before this situation despite its incredible complexity. True, more factors (strategy, cold war, oil, Israel, emotions, religions, internal American politics, vital British interests, French tribulations, practically everybody) are involved in the Near Eastern crisis than perhaps anywhere else, but no multiplicity of factors need defy high statesmanship resolved to be firm in the right. And the right is the stability of the Near East on the basis of real justice, the prosperity of its peoples, and the bringing to bear the best possible intelligence and will upon its manifold problems. The right is so to love the peoples of the Near East and so to understand their difficulties as to make them know and choose their good; so to argue with them in all love and at all levels as to make them realize that with so many interests converging upon them from all sides, both in space and in time, they have special responsibilities not only to themselves but to the world.

In these pages I propose to be very concise, touching only on fundamental matters. In the light of the fundamental all else can be understood and adjusted. It is necessary also to abstract our attention from persons and to focus on objective political, social and spiritual conditions. In international politics-and the politics of the Near East are essentially international-long range drifts and interests are paramount; persons and movements only express and illustrate these drifts. The statesmen, both in the East and in the West, cannot be hardheaded or realistic enough in dealing with our situation; and yet it is essential in a sensitive and central region like the Near East to make due allowance for the legitimate demands of freedom, truth, justice and peace. Policies and actions cannot be countenanced

that clearly contravene these things. The possible can always be stretched to conform more and more with the ideal. In these reflections I do obeisance to the requirements of freedom, truth, justice and peace, in their deepest sense.

My discussion covers eight topics: the Communist penetration of the area; the Arab-Israeli conflict; the general Egyptian situation; inter-Arab relations; the rivalries among the Western Powers; the basic economic and social conditions; the wealth pouring into this region; and the abiding factors in the situation.



The Communist penetration of the Near East is very serious. Moscow probably has never in history had the direct or indirect influence it now enjoys in the Near East. Communist parties and front organizations are very important, but they are not the only avenues of influence. The manipulation of real or imagined grievances, of national needs, of deep-seated anti-Westernism, of religious fanaticism and of local rivalries offers great opportunities to intriguers. When the game is open it is much better to achieve your ends through those who are not identified with you or even those who persecute you. Also, Communism thrives best under persecution and therefore at times it deliberately invites it. Thus the fact that here or there the Communist Party is banned and Communists are put in prison proves little as to the degree of influence that Moscow actually wields.

The consummation of this penetration has occurred during the last 12 months, but the studied preparation for it has been going on for perhaps 30 years. Agents have been trained or primed or enlisted and placed in key positions—in trade unions, in the press, in government, in the community at large and perhaps even in Western capitals. Not a single word of criticism of the Communist world is allowed to find its way into the government-controlled press of some important Near Eastern countries, whereas defiant and exultant abuse of the West is the daily menu of the reader. The increase in recent years in the reading of Communist literature throughout the area has been phenomenal both in itself and relatively to the increase in the reading of non-Communist French, English, American or other literature. Many Communist classics are now available in Arabic and the quantity and variety of Communist literature on display in book stores is simply amazing. A book critical of Communism will hardly find a publisher and, if published, will hardly find a reader. In some countries certain sections of the press are liberally subsidized by international Communism.

It is sometimes very difficult to tell whether a man is a Communist or a nationalist: both men use exactly the same language and resort to exactly the same tactics. In some countries the general direction of policy is dominated by the Communists, and even the army falls under their influence. There is a persistent wooing of governments and public opinion by Communist trade missions, and the trade agreements signed with Communist countries have increased the volume of trade to an unprecedented degree. Communist industrial exhibits, invitations to visit the Communist countries, Communist musical and dancing troupes and other Communist cultural incursions have considerably multiplied in recent months. The clergy and laity of the Greek Orthodox Church have been the particular target of Communist cultivation: a Greek Orthodox Bishop is going to preside over the World Conference of the Partisans of Peace meeting in Peking this summer.

Three or four years ago you could criticize Communism in public; now the atmosphere has become distinctly uncongenial to that. Even one year ago to be “pro-Western,” whatever the phrase may mean, was not a source of embarrassment or shame; today it is. Even in strictly private circles of very intimate friends, friends who themselves are Western-educated, who directly or indirectly owe everything to the West, and who one or two years ago would have felt a distinct source of pride and honor to be identified with the West, people are consciously restrained either in saying critical things about Communism or nice things about the West.

All of this constitutes a grand Western debacle. The point is that it is all new. This Communist penetration is the most important phenomenon in the Near East at present, more important, in my opinion, than the Arab-Israeli conflict, and the interpretation or adjustment of every other situation, including the Arab Israeli problem, should be made with this matter in view. To examine fully its profound causation will take us far afield, but among its general causes are the following: 1, the superb performance of the Communist Party, both international and local; 2, the moral rehabilitation that Communism has achieved since the Geneva Conference of last summer and as a result of the policy of coexistence and of the exchange of visits between the Communist and the non-Communist worlds; 3, the Communist success in the Bandung Conference and the sedulous exploitation by the Communists of this success; and 4, the absence of a profound Western ideology adequate to refute and replace Communism in the mind and heart of the Near East.

Among the special causes operative in the Near East are the following: a, Arab disaffection on account of Israel; b, siding by the Communists with the Arabs at the United Nations, through declarations made by Communist leaders and through agents in the Arab world, in matters related to Palestine and to North Africa, while the West seemed opposed to

the Arabs; c, the Arab refugee camps serving as hotbeds of Communism; d, the recent dominating presence of the West in the Near East and the appearance of Communism by contrast as a liberator from that domination; e, the identification in some instances of the West with crumbling and despotic economic, social and political systems; f, the growth of social consciousness among the peoples of the Near East with nothing like an adequate program of reform correspondingly introduced to remedy the unjust and inhuman social and economic conditions that have prevailed since the beginning of time; g, lack of harmony among the Western Powers with regard to their policy in the Near East; h, the political and military rapprochement between some Arab countries and the Communist Powers; i, the fact that weak or degenerate or softened-up or pro-Communist governments developed in some lands while such development was not an historical necessity but took place almost by default; j, the absence of a sufficiently bold imaginative action on the part of the West and of responsible leaders and institutions in the area with respect to books, magazines, pamphlets, newspapers and the realm of ideas in general; k, the age-old spiritual plight of Greek Orthodoxy in the Near East, especially in its separation from Western Christianity; and l, the fact that certain elements in Islam admit of an interpretation that accords with Communism.

It is much harder now to meet this situation than it was two years ago or even one year ago. The ambiguities have multiplied frightfully. The above listing of the causes at work itself suggests a program of action. In particular, the West must soon develop an objectively just policy with respect to Palestine. So long as the injustice done the Arabs in Palestine continues, and so long as the Arabs feel that the West was responsible for this matter, they will continue turning to Communism for succor.

It is doubtful whether any policy of appeasement can in the long run succeed. Let the West, then, after making sure of an absolutely fair policy in Palestine, frankly, firmly and boldly make the friendship or at least the real neutrality of the Near Eastern countries (e.g. in the government-controlled press, in government declarations, in positive policy decisions) a condition for the friendship of the West towards them. This is a perfectly honorable position.

The political field is most important. The question is not so much what must the West do but what must the Near Eastern countries themselves do. Is there a sufficient backbone to resist Communism? This is the real question. If the people of the Near East elect to go Communist, nothing can stop them. The situation therefore cannot much improve until strong, clean, positive, courageous, farsighted governments dedicated to the principles of freedom and human welfare and entirely clear in their minds as to where their real interests lie have arisen and made them selves felt. The conception of authority and the social and economic structures of society in the Near East are such that history has always been the handmaid of governments and armies.



It is not difficult to show that neither Israel nor the Arabs can gain anything today by war. One must assume therefore that both parties have come or will come to this conclusion, whether by themselves or as others frankly explain the matter to them. The political and military realities, not only in the Near East, but throughout the world (and by now everybody knows that the whole world bears on this problem), are such that whichever side may be tempted to start a war can objectively calculate in advance the enormous odds against it. In the absence of a fundamental rational will to war (and one cannot argue on the basis of unreason; one can only guard against it), every incident can be controlled or patched up. That there is no will to war appears to be the general conclusion of the Secretary-General of the United Nations in his report to the Security Council of May 10, 1956. One must further assume that the necessary international precautions have been or are in process of being taken should war break out on a large scale, precautions that appear to be relatively easy to take.

When people talk of “peace” between Israel and the Arabs they usually assimilate the problem to other international conflicts. France and Germany fought each other, and then they concluded “peace;” so did the United States and Spain; so did North and South Korea (though in this instance it is so far only an armistice); why, then, is the same pattern not possible in Palestine? This mode of thinking overlooks the fact that by every standard the situation in Palestine is *sui generis*. To mention only three radical differences: In some of the other international conflicts there was a victor who could impose peace on the vanquished; there is no such overpowering victor in the present instance. In most cases there was an underlying unity of culture or race or religion, so that the conflict had in a profound sense the character of a family quarrel; there is no such underlying unity in the present instance. In the other cases war broke out between already existing states; in this instance the Arabs view Israel as a creation by force of a state that displaced them from their own land. It follows that the categories of thought applicable to other “wars” are not applicable here.

It begins to appear, then, that the present outlook is one of no war and no peace. This is exactly how strange the situation is. But allowing that normal political, social and economic inter course between Israel and the Arab world is not now possible, does it follow that nothing whatsoever can be done about the situation? Nothing of the sort follows. What first follows is that people must be realistic, calm and unsentimental in face of this utterly strange, utterly unique situation, and that, from the point of view of world peace and even of some hope for the Near Eastern situation itself, no war is already a very great gain.

Looking more positively beyond all this, however, it appears to me: a, that the Arab refugee situation can be eased up partly through Western Galilee, partly through some acceptable plan for the development of the Jordan Valley waters, partly through some agreed arrangement for the resettlement of the remaining refugees in Arab lands; b, that regardless of the coolness of some quarters to this matter, regardless of the apparent impossibility of Israel entertaining the cession of Western Galilee, and regard less of the obvious difficulty connected with the ultimate political disposition of Western Galilee should Israel agree to ceding it, Western Galilee is a clearly indicated key to the solution of the problem of Arab refugees, especially if, having regard to the United Nations resolutions of 1947 and 1948, some juridical basis in international law and not just in sheer force is to be discovered for this whole tangled problem; c, that the question of connecting Egypt with the other Arab countries by land through the Negeb is not insoluble; d, that the problem of compensation for property or money seized or lost or relinquished is not insoluble; e, that a return to some form of the United Nations scheme for the internationalization of Jerusalem should be pressed; f, that the problem of armaments race and armaments balance, including the problem of the supply of arms from Communist countries, should not be beyond the resourcefulness of Western diplomacy and action; and g, that the recent re-seizing by the United Nations of the Palestine question, with the vigorous activity displayed by the Secretary-General, may lead to further precise definition of difficulties and therefore to a more active search for their solution.

In his speech at the B'nai B'rith Convention on May 8, 1956, Secretary Dulles said: "There was a belief [among the NATO Powers meeting the week before in Paris] that reliance should, above all, be placed in the processes of the United Nations, and that we can, perhaps, do so now with somewhat greater confidence, since the Soviet Union seems at least to be increasingly aware of the dangerous consequences of reckless action and has indicated that it, too, would be prepared to support a solution through the United Nations.... Past efforts toward a settlement of the substantive issues in the Middle East have encountered serious obstacles. The task is immensely complex and I have no illusion that solutions will be easily come by. But if progress is difficult it is also necessary, and we intend to make that progress."

Mr. Dulles has in mind the Soviet statement on the Middle East of April 17, 1956, and the Soviet support at the Security Council of the United States resolution dispatching the Secretary-General to the Near East. Both of these Soviet moves register the firm presence of the Soviet Union in the Near East; and the remission by the Western Powers of the Palestine question to the councils of the United Nations together with their silence on the Three-Power declaration of 1950 both signify their acceptance, at least for the time being, of this presence. The next phase appears to be a trial by the Great Powers among themselves of the

new Soviet policy of peaceful coexistence in its bearing upon the Near East. In the interest of world peace the situation in the Near East can be composed by agreement among the permanent members of the Security Council. This agreement could include adjustment of their respective interests in the Near East, including concessions to the Soviet Union in matters of strategy and even of oil. This ought to bring home to all concerned the obvious fact that the Near East is not in another planet nor even at the South Pole (even there the Powers are present and in conflict) but at the heart of the world, and that since everything bears upon it, its questions are functions not only of its own peoples but also of the interests of the Great Powers. This is a sobering thought both to the wise and to the childish.

Israel is a great mystery. You are not dealing with political issues only: there are profound theological dimensions to the mystery. But whatever the aspect under which the situation is viewed, the Near East can never be the same again after the rise of Israel. The present political reaction is only the first spontaneous, and to that extent superficial, reaction to this new and strange fact. In the maturation of their reaction, when they wake up sufficiently to what has really happened and when they take in its total meaning, the Arabs will in their wonder reach down to far deeper levels of their existence. They will undergo a profound transformation. It is most important that the world, including Israel and world Jewry, should base their relations to the Arabs on manifest principles of justice and truth. Force and arbitrary decision introduce a vicious circle with no end. But objective truth and justice can still the emotions and help in establishing peace.

IV

The economic and social problems of Egypt require the undivided attention of Egypt for at least a generation, and even then they will not be met without a scientific and technological revolution in Egypt. The question is whether, having regard to the demographic factor and the available natural resources, the average Egyptian standard of living can conceivably rise to that of France or Italy, not to mention the United States. This question could have been, and was in fact, practically overlooked in former ages when the masses were asleep; in this socialistic age it assumes primary political importance. No one who does not have the profoundest insight into this crucial problem can understand the present and probable future developments of Egypt; and no one who does not have some answer to it can really help Egypt.

Now an adequate revolution in science and technology is not something that can be simply wished or easily bought; it requires intimate association with the living sources of science and technology. There are only three such living sources: the Soviet Union, Western Europe and North America. Egypt, to be able to face her fundamental issues, must (and this applies

in varying degrees to all underdeveloped countries) associate herself with one or a proper combination of these three sources. So long as the cold war in any form continues, Egypt cannot associate herself equally with all three. Essentially, therefore, neutralism is impossible for Egypt; at best it is fraught with the greatest dangers.

The Egyptian problem, therefore, from the point of view of Egypt's relations to the outside world, is twofold: a, whether a happy association, on the basis of sincere friendship and understanding and on terms of strict and honorable equality, can be worked out between Egypt and the Atlantic Community, or whether Egypt is fated ultimately to associate herself with the Communist world; and b, the sort of relations that will develop between Egypt and the other Near Eastern countries, including Israel and Turkey, as a result of either alternative.

But an association to be equal presupposes that the associates are in fact equal precisely in that for which they have come together. If one associate remains behind the other in that which brought them together, then he will continue to be dependent upon his partner. It is science and technology that brings Egypt and some living source of science and technology together; therefore it is necessary for Egypt to catch up in these fields. But science and technology can never be mechanically grafted from the outside: they can take and grow only in cultures that are scientific; they are in fact the inner free creation of cultures that are already fundamentally determined and oriented in a certain way. But this requires a totally different spirit from what obtains among the peoples of the Near East. Not until there is a radical distinction in the mind between truth and error, fact and fancy, reason and imagination, reality and dreams, knowledge and poetry, achievement and wish, the common good and the individual good, the universal and the particular, and not until this distinction embodies itself not only in the attitude of the people to nature, life, society, history and other people, but in vigorous, free intellectual institutions in communion with the cumulative tradition of science, can a culture "become" scientific and therefore help in the advancement of science. For Egypt and for every country in the Near East this means profound transformations of the mind and spirit.

By reason of her splendid location and her cultural riches, Egypt occupies a dominant position in the Arab world. Nothing therefore is more important than how she conceives and develops her rôle among her Arab neighbors. Is this role going to be primarily political? If it is, what is the degree of real independence that Egypt's Arab partners can enjoy? On reflection, and when one considers responsibly every factor, it can be shown that the most fruitful and stable association among the Arab states must have regard to the diversity of their interests and even of their destiny. They complement one another, and therefore they should be and feel free and equal among themselves. Within this equality, the "unity of the Nile Valley" is an ultimate fact that must sooner or later express itself in appropriate political terms.

But Egypt's role cannot be only political; it cannot move only among the categories of rule and dominion and Arab unity. Egypt has always been a fecund source of ideas and attitudes. And this is the most important problem. What is the fundamental bent of the will and mind that is going to emerge from Egypt? Responsible statesmen and thinkers cannot ponder this question too deeply. Let everyone therefore who really loves Egypt stress on every occasion and before all and sundry the supreme importance, not only of the political categories of glory and power and unity, not only of raising the standard of living of the masses, but of real freedom of thought and conscience, of light, of truth and of joy.

Egypt is faced with four ultimate challenges: the challenge of the masses, the challenge of finding her real position in the Arab world, the illusion of neutralism and the reality of freedom. If she rises to these challenges in accordance with the truth, Egypt has a glorious future.

V

The division between the Nile and the Euphrates-Tigris valleys must be reckoned as one of the permanent geopolitical facts of this region. This division can be modulated, but it cannot be overcome. Another division is between the Hashemites and the Saudis, and unless Saudi Arabia feels itself firmly secure, it must ally itself with Egypt.

There is a fundamental phenomenon in Near Eastern life today, and that is the extent to which the oil riches of this area can affect not only international but also inter-Arab relations. As a result, we have hardly ever seen the corruption of character that now prevails. Gold and money in the hands of frightened or insecure or ambitious or unprincipled people are terrible things. Friends and allies can be bought and sold. It is nonsense to be indifferent in the face of ultimate things affecting the destiny of peoples and cultures and the relations between the West and the Near East.

Syria is the ally of Egypt but Jordan and Lebanon are standing relatively aloof. The possibilities of development in Iraq and Syria are immense. If suitable and stable relations are evolved between the northern Arab countries they can promote a high standard of living and they can add considerably to the stability of the area. This problem is ripe for consideration. Difficulties among the Arabs, between the Arabs and Israel, and between the Arabs and the West, stand in the way of a closer association among the northern Arab countries; but these difficulties can all be looked into and overcome. Three principles should in the end decide the matter: what is natural, what is good for the peace and security of the area and what is good for the cause of freedom, light and truth.

Lebanon should remain open to the East and to the West so that both worlds could feel at home in it. The wonderful intellectual and spiritual liberties of Lebanon should not be sacrificed no matter in what name and for what cause. These liberties are a boon to everybody. Eastern and Western statesmanship can combine to work out adequate guarantees for Lebanon as an authentic home of freedom—freedom of enterprise, freedom of thought, freedom of conscience, freedom of being and freedom of becoming.

VI

I believe a resolute common policy and united front by the Western Powers, whereby they adjust their interests to one another with no infringement upon the rights and interests of the peoples of the Near East, can master, if not altogether solve, every problem in the Near East, despite the alarming Communist penetration. This is a challenge to their perspicacity in the present total world situation. Community of policy does not mean forming a bloc against the countries of the Near East; it does not mean agreeing at our expense; it means uniting in a firm and enlightened policy of justice and friendship towards the peoples of the area. What is needed is solid agreement between the United States, the United Kingdom and France on the precise lines of policy that would give effect to Mr. Dulles's statement on May 8, 1956: "Also we want friendly political, cultural and economic relations with all the nations of the area on a basis of impartiality." Rising above narrow interests and taking every delicate matter into account, the realm of freedom ought to be able to develop a finely-modulated plan that is objectively defensible and that does not offend.

If Western civilization is not internally resilient enough to effect a working accommodation among its diverse interests in the Near East on the basis of freedom and justice, then Marx was right in predicting that the West will fall under the weight of its own internal contradictions. But since it is a matter not only of blind interests (as Marx believed), but of reason and conscious will, the West could rise both to master its diverse interests and to invalidate Marx. The blind fatalism of Marx can be easily overcome by the conscious design of reason. But people must rise above themselves and the Atlantic Community must really feel and act as one.

A common effective Western policy requires not only agreement by the President of the United States, the Prime Minister of Great Britain and the Premier of France and their Foreign Secretaries (always on the basis of justice and respect for the peoples concerned), but strict coordination on the lowest operative level in the field. One at times gains the impression either that there is not enough discipline on this level with respect to the higher

authorities, or that there is no real unity of vision at the top, or that it is part of this unity of vision that the operative agents shall appear to be working at cross purposes. This last alternative is farfetched and only the perplexed and wondering mind thinks of it.

Whatever the cause and whatever the mode of its operation, the Western Powers do not seem to see eye to eye with one another nor to be able to cover up their differences, if not before the public, at least before those who know. The result has been a scandalous weakening of Western prestige. The political and intellectual retreat of the West from the Near East is in no small measure due to inexcusable rivalries among the Western Powers themselves.

One might see in this phenomenon only a transient stage of adjustment among the Western Powers with respect to their relative presence in the Near East. According to this view we are witnessing one grand historical movement whereby America is gradually displacing Europe in the Near East, with the inevitable frictions, pains and temporary vacua that attend such a process. But there are a few basic truths that must be kept in mind.

It is true the presence of the United States is being increasingly felt in the Near East: there is no comparison between the American entanglement in the Near East today and the state of affairs 20 or even 10 years ago. Israel, Turkey, the Arabian oil fields, the general military and economic interests of the Atlantic Community, all of these and many others profoundly commit America in this area. But, first, France is a great Mediterranean Power and has had intimate relations with the Near East for centuries, and culturally she cannot be displaced. Second, the United Kingdom has still the closest ties with the Near East through Iraq, Jordan, Turkey, the Suez base, Cyprus (despite the present difficulties there), East Africa, and the oil fields of the Persian Gulf; and the economy of the United Kingdom, and indeed of Europe in general, is far more dependent upon the oil of the Middle East than is that of the United States. It appears that the Middle East is vital to the United Kingdom and to Western Europe. Third, Australia and New Zealand, and other parts of the Commonwealth, have a stake in the Middle East; and Australian and New Zealand forces fought and died in the Middle East in two world wars. And fourth, it is true there have been in history and indeed there are today vast movements of adjustment and displacement of influence among big and small Powers alike, and some such adjustment is always inevitable, but if one asks what are the historical movements of the present age, one must mention, side by side with Communism, the industrialization of Russia and the rise of Asia and Africa, the integration of the Atlantic Community. Presumably, then, within the unity of this Community questions of displacement and adjustment of power arise as within one family. Presumably, England, France and America, as integral parts of this Community, need not rival or displace or undermine one another in the Near East, or anywhere else. I am aware of the complication of Communism in the case of France, but the French nation, so long as it is a pillar in the

Atlantic Community, can never turn Communist. From all this it follows that the Western Powers have absolutely no excuse not to reinforce one another in the calm elaboration of a common Western policy in the Near East on the basis of justice.

Historically, strategically, economically, politically and culturally the West is vitally linked to the Near East. The Mediterranean is an offshoot of the Atlantic, and every Atlantic culture is aware of its ultimate Near Eastern roots. The accession of Italy, Greece and Turkey to the Atlantic Community is proof of this. There can therefore be for the West no hostile Near East developing. For more than a century the only external influences energizing our area have been Western. The misunderstanding between Greece and England on account of Cyprus will pass. Turkey, despite her economic problems, will stand. The Persian situation, never ideal, is nevertheless better than under Mossadegh. Iraq seems to hold firm in her friendship with the West. Lebanon's attachment to the West is well known (for instance, there are as many people from Lebanon in North and South America as there are in Lebanon herself). And there are many economic and juridical ties between the West and the other countries of the Near East. All in all, then, the balance sheet for the West in the Near East is not unfavorable. The political, intellectual and spiritual setback suffered in certain quarters should therefore be redressed. The alliance between Communism, radical nationalism, anti-Westernism, xenophobia and religious reaction and fanaticism need not be the last word. If wisdom, depth and firmness in the right come to their own, I am sure a fruitful era of cooperation between the West and all the countries of the Near East can be inaugurated on the basis of honor, equality and mutual respect. But it is essential that whatever the West does with its enemies or with those who have no feeling for its values, it should not forsake its friends.

VII

It is within the power of the Western world to help introduce in the Near East vast schemes of economic and social development. The Aswan Dam and other projects in Egypt, the Jordan Valley, the Litani Project, the vast irrigation projects in Syria and Iraq, these and many other possibilities can no longer wait to be initiated. Not only the elementary cause of human welfare, not only the policy of combatting Communism in the Near East, but the cause of peace itself demands that. The age-old conditions of squalor and inhumanity prevailing in the Middle East can no longer be tolerated. The West could have done much more for economic and social progress in the Near East during the decades of its responsibility for it. Now that the people themselves are responsible for their destiny, the West can come in only as a friend and partner.

The tragedy is that what is socially and economically necessary and possible meets with political difficulties. Western capital and technique can do wonders in this area, but it is immobilized so long as the political factor is not cleared. The West says in effect it cannot help unconditionally; and this is certainly natural and just. But what the West means by this is two things: a, it must make sure that the countries helped will not (as happened elsewhere) join the enemies of the West or otherwise count against the West in an emergency; and b, it must make sure that Israel is not endangered. The West appears therefore to say: "Let me be sure of your essential friendship, or at least that you will not count against me in an emergency, and let me be sure that your development will not endanger Israel, and there are no limits to what you and I can do together for economic and social progress in the Near East." What is being done at present (through Point Four, etc.) outside this proposed scope is important, but it is entirely inadequate to the objective needs of the situation.

One understands both conditions although one may not agree with one or the other of them. It is right that the West make sure that what it does should not one day be turned against it; at least it cannot afford such a risk until the outcome of its struggle with Communism has become more clear. This the countries of the Near East must and can be made to understand. As we pointed out above, there are only three living sources of science and technology in the world, and so long as the cold war in any form rages, the underdeveloped countries cannot associate themselves equally with all of them. But the things of the world are never pure black and pure white, and it is wise never to give up a country until both people and government are distinctly and clearly against one. (Has the West, for example, given up Eastern Europe or even the peoples of Russia?) The West has ample opportunities to prevent such an unnecessary eventuality. Thus the West could be far more sophisticated, far more nuance, far less rigid (as in fact in many instances it is), in its approach than the above statement of its position might suggest.

Furthermore, trust begets trust. When otherwise neutral or bewildered people are faced with a truly generous act, they are bound to respond. If America, for instance, in the characteristically generous American spirit, comes to Egypt with the offer to present Egypt with the Aswan Dam without any conditions, nothing is more certain than that this act would make the strongest possible positive impression upon both the government and people of Egypt. What are one or two billion dollars in 10 or 20 years beside this result?

Again, one way of stiffening the resistance of the countries of the Middle East to Communism is to demonstrate to them that you have a better answer to their problems yourself. Although there are many other factors involved (e.g. the state of mind of the intellectuals), factors that should never be lost sight of, yet the continuance of the appalling and shameful economic and social conditions is certainly no help in the fight against

Communism. You do not tell a man caught in a house on fire, "First put out the fire and then I will help you get out of the house." Give him the means to get out of the house himself and then judge him if he does not help you in putting out the fire. Most certainly you should make sure that your house does not catch fire as a result of his behavior either before or after he quits the house. I am certain this precaution is well within the resource fulness of the West.

Moreover, the Near East does not lack leaders who would have nothing of Communism, who would like to be related to the West and who are afire with social vision. It is these men who should be encouraged to put through the necessary reform. The future of the Near East depends on the 50 men of vision who are not sufficiently encouraged and supported by those who care.

As to the hard dilemma with which the West confronts the Arabs, I can only add to what I said above under Arab-Israeli relations that it is not fair nor finally conducive to peace to tie the fate of the Arabs so rigidly to that of Israel. Let the two peoples develop for the time being along two parallel independent lines. Let the West give Israel every guarantee but let it not in the meantime penalize the Arabs. The independent parallel development obviously cannot go on forever, but for the present let not the progress of the Arabs be delayed. This is the test of the policy of "impartiality." Western idealists desire to see Israel and the Arabs embrace each other tomorrow and live as good neighbors in the manner of the Americans and Canadians. This is not possible. I am certain, if Israel does not want to expand, and if the West absolutely guarantees it, then with the giving of this guarantee the West can feel free to help liberally in the economic and social advancement of the Arabs.

VIII

Billions upon billions of dollars are going to pour into the Near East in the next 50 or 100 years from the exploitation of the oil resources of the region. With the exception of Iraq, the immediate beneficiaries of this wealth are desert kingdoms and sheikhdoms which cannot develop or support a flourishing civilization. This is an ideal situation for the generation of tensions, jealousies and strains. Is it altogether impossible-humanly and politically-for the combined wisdom of the West and the Near East to examine and overcome this situation? I believe ways and means can be found (banks, corporations, development schemes, industrial institutes, political arrangements, etc.) for the more equitable distribution of this wealth in the Near East and for its productive investment throughout the region. At present this wealth finds its way here and there for the most part according to a law of caprice, but what is needed is rational, farsighted design on a regional basis. Despite its fabulous

quantities, this wealth is still finite, and therefore it is not likely to last more than one or two or at the most three or four generations, especially owing to the certain development of alternate nuclear and other kinds of fuel. Thus unless in the very short interval of grace granted us this wealth is turned into capital investment in the Near East, when the excitement is over the desert will once again assert its sway over this land. Life in the Near East is a perpetual fight against the desert, and always the desert won in the past. If all of us are wise, there is now a bare chance, owing to what the desert itself has been hiding all these ages in its bosom, to conquer the desert for good.

IX

The situation in the Near East is in flux. Underneath the flux there are certain abiding factors that should never be lost sight of. These are: 1, the economic, social, political and spiritual problems of the Near East; 2, the oil of the region; 3, the preeminent strategic importance of the area; 4, the modulation of the presence of the West in the Near East; 5, the Russian shadow or the Communist penetration; 6, Arab nationalism and the question of how the Arabs are going to develop their association among themselves; 7, the bearing of Zionism upon the Near East; 8, the question of how Arab, Jew, Turk and Persian shall develop their relations among themselves; and 9, Islam. The history of the Near East for a long time to come will be enacted by the actual, concrete day-to-day interlacing, interaction and interpenetration of these nine basic elements in the situation.

There is no problem in the Near East in which the United States is not involved and to the solution of which it cannot make a considerable contribution. It follows that responsibility for the development of events in the Near East falls in part upon the United States. A modicum of sustained determination by the United States on the deepest possible plane can do wonders in the Near East. The most important requisite is a profound grasp of the ultimate issues at stake, including above all the intellectual, moral and spiritual issues. On the basis of such a grasp the course of practical political wisdom becomes perfectly plain. When vision, wisdom and determination thus join, and when the means to give effect to these are available, then history in the most exalted sense is set in motion. At the moment when the Near East is coming again on the stage of history, the United States is entering the history of the Near East.